

HAA POET LAUREATE POEM  
2017

Living Proof That The  
Harvard Club of New York  
Is  
Heaven

Instead of my customary poem as your Poet Laureate, I thought I should read you a copy of an email I received from an extremely distraught member of the Harvard Club of New York from Mr. Milton William Yanair, Class of '34 which was sent after he heard that the last living member of the Class of 1934, his class, had died and thus the Harvard Alumni Association had shut down his class report. I recognized the extent of his emotional distress when I realized that his email was written in six line stanzas and couplets with instructions that it must be read with a committed Boston Brahmin accent. The email reads:

TO: Diane McDonald, Class Reports Office HAA, College Alumni Programs  
CC: Mary Saunders, Curator of the Harvard Club of New York  
BCC: Robert Bowie, Jr. '73, Poet Laureate of the H.A.A.  
FROM: Milton William Yanair

Dear Diane, What's this nonsense 'bout closing my class?  
I'm writing to tell you that you can kiss my... past  
And future, ever so generous, trust funded gifts  
Earmarked for senior faculty botox face lifts -  
Goodbye - unless my demands are henceforth met  
For let me assure you, I'm-not-dead-yet!

Recognize the name? Milton William Yanair?  
Development calls me: Milty "Bill" Yanair.  
We are the seafaring people from Cape Cod  
Who traveled on winds provided directly from God!  
Not Mayflower people, who are all snobs.  
No. We come from the Captain of the Pequod.

I contributed that statute of me that I chose to share  
Which ended up, somehow, somewhere in Central Square.  
Fair Harvard will confirm I'm on its "A" List  
But now you've turned me into a terrorist  
Locked in Room 520 with my knife and a fork  
And twitter in the Harvard Club of New York.

But note I do not complain. I do not curse.  
This is not a situation I'd reverse.  
Unlike anywhere else on this earth  
Or anywhere else in this universe,  
There's no place anywhere I'd rather be.  
It's like Heaven but with a better library.

All my fellow Club Members are all just superb  
My brothers and sisters offer an encouraging word.  
The young join with the old and the retired.  
We all dress for dinner. A tie is required.  
Unfortunately no one I meet is much like me  
But at least we are all "snobs" when it comes to Yalies.

Anyway, I'm here until my demands are all met.  
The trouble is what they are, I sometimes forget.  
Last night I dialed the front desk but got Roto Rooter  
To fix my T.V. which turned out to be a computer.  
Forgetting a number and ending up like that  
Is like when I try to remember "alternative facts".

But thank God I graduated and got my degree!  
I have all day to love this place and love what I see:  
Like all those moose heads that live on that wall.

They all have this expression – Not one but all –  
They seem to believe they're flashing a "full moon"  
On the other side of a wall in a neighboring room;

And the dining room and the great Harvard Hall  
With their balconies that must be two stories tall  
With this massive elephant that's turning from gray into blue  
That looks like it's coming down with a case of the flu  
It's ears flat on the wall and his trunk extended.  
Looks like it died in mid-sneeze after being rear-ended.

Anyway it is nice to be lost here on all nine floors.  
I'm a happy tourist on my endless club tour  
Of banners and prints, portraits and porcelain plates  
And those witty posters of old Pudding dates,  
Those tapestries of Harvard Hall all safe within  
The Georgian Architecture of Charles McKim

And photos of classes and of sports teams in bandanas.  
In my living museum of Harvardiana...  
And there's personal history too, that's quite heart felt:  
The most repeatedly cleaned portrait is of Roosevelt  
Because projectile butter pads made it quite filthy  
After my entire class voted for Wendell Willkie...

But wait, I'm remembering my dinner last night?  
I'm remembering my tie was not tied quite right.  
I remember my jacket and my hands at my throat. I  
Was admitted to dinner without wearing a tie?  
Have they changed the tradition of how we all dine?  
If so, I henceforth, do hereby, resign!

No, wait! No, wait! I remember. I understand.  
This must have been one of my forgotten demands.  
No, wait! No, wait! Let me catch my breath.  
Why did Diane end my class? Was it my death?  
Oh God – no one gets in without wearing a tie!  
My God! Is it possible I really did die?

...I offer apologies as best as I can  
To both, Mary Saunders and of course, Diane.  
I promise you both when I got out of bed  
I didn't remember that I was actually dead –  
But to have dementia last past one's demise  
Is welcome and such a pleasant surprise.

How marvelous that it has turned out so well.  
I'm not in Purgatory and jumped right over Hell –  
I'm in Heaven but with a better library!  
There's no place in the universe I'd rather be  
Than locked in Room 520 with my knife and a fork  
And twitter in the Harvard Club of New York.